WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A maintenance method for an ink jet head which ejects ink supplied via an ink supply path, as ink droplets from a plurality of orifices arranged in an orifice plate, the method comprising:

controlling the pressure in said ink supply path against the atmospheric pressure applied to a surface of the ink to push the ink out of each orifice and then align the surface of the ink to a surface of said orifice plate; and

sucking ink near each orifice in a state where the ink surface is approximately aligned to the surface of said orifice plate.

2. A maintenance apparatus for an ink jet head which ejects ink supplied via an ink supply path, as ink droplets from a plurality of orifices arranged in an orifice plate, the apparatus comprising:

a pressure control section which controls the pressure in said ink supply path against the atmospheric pressure applied to a surface of the ink to push ink out of each orifice and then align the surface of the ink to a surface of said orifice plate; and

an ink suction section which sucks ink near each orifice in a state where the ink surface is approximately aligned to the surface of said orifice plate by said pressure control section.

3. The maintenance apparatus according to

claim 2, wherein said ink suction section includes a suction nozzle which moves in an arrangement direction of said orifices along said orifice plate.

4. The maintenance apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the surface of said orifice plate is a protection member arranged to surround each orifice, and said suction nozzle is set in contact with or separated from said protection member by an air gap during the movement.